

THE
Three Last Sermons,
PREACHED

By the Late Reverend
Mr. Timothy Cruso.

Who Dyed, *Novem. 26. 1697.*

To which is added His
SERMON
On the *5th. Nov. 1697.*

L O N D O N :

Printed by **S. Bridge**, for **Tho. Park-**
hurst at the *Bible and Three Crowns* in
Cheapside near Mercers-Chapel, 1698.

TO THE
READER.

THE Reverend Author of these Sermons, was well known for his Eminency in Ministerial Abilities, and his great Faithfulness and Diligence in the Exercise of them, to his Honour from whom he had receiv'd them, and to whom they were wholly Due.

He had a good Understanding in the Visions of God, and found out (as the Preacher did) acceptable Words to explain Eccles. 12.10. them, such as did at once, both Please, and Profit. By his skilfulness in those Visions, he was as Eyes to the Blind, and by his Diligence in the Use of it, he consum'd himself (like a Taper) by giving Light to others, which makes the Loss the greater, and the Repair the more difficult.

The Argument he makes use of to perswade backsliding Sinners to return to God, is grounded on the Divine Precept, and the Divine Promise,

To the Reader.

mise ; on the Precept, as the Ground of Conscience, and on the Promise, as the Ground of Confidence ; on that, as their Warrant, and on this, as their Encouragement to it.

Sin has indeed made a Separation between God and Sinners as to his Grace and Favour, though not as to his Essence and Power : But a New and Living Way by Christ (who united God to Man in Favour, by uniting God to Man in Person) is opened, wherein, they who are at a great Distance from God, and deserve to be set at an irrecoverable Distance from him, may have free Access to him. The Command shows they must come, and the Promise, that with Hope they may, that makes it necessary to be done, and this Beneficial, if it is.

The swiftness of the Compassionate Fathers Motion towards the returning Prodigal Son, (who ran while he did but come) and the great Entertainment he made for him when come, shew, how willing the Father was, that he should come, and how Welcome the Son was when he did come, stands upon Record to express that great Compassion in God to Sinners (who more willingly calls them than they either are, or can) be to come at his call ; and that delicate Provision, the best, and sweetest (a Feast of Fat Things, the sweetest Part of Meat, and of Marrow, the sweetest Part of Fat) and those strong and pure Consolations (Wine on the Lees well refin'd, one noting Strength, and the other Purity) that he Feeds them with in the Way in his Banqueting-house (the House of Pleasure and
Feast-

To the Reader.

Feasting) the foretasts of that better Cheer reserv'd for them in the Mansion-house, those Everlasting Consolations, that are ever the same, always satiating without Loathing, and ever Renewing without Finishing.

This Good-Will of God to Sinners on his Part might allure them to come, but the Necessity on their Part to come, should Compel them to it ; for, their is no Medium betwixt Salvation and Damnation, nor any Way to obtain the one, or escape the other, but by Coming.

The Philosopher tells us, that there is no Counsel about things of Ne-
cessity, they admit no Debate, Im-
possibility is a Hinderance to Reason,
Difficulty is a Hinderance to Sloth, but Ne-
cessity Quickens to Action ; and would they
but set the Necessity against the Difficulty,
they would either find no Difficulty, or make
it none, by overcoming it, especially in a Mat-
ter of that Moment, where a Delay makes
the Case dangerous, and a total Neglect makes
it desperate.

Ar. Rb. 1.
I. C. 9.

You have Gods Call to come, let him have your Answer, that you will come ; that you are coming (behold we come) with your Call to him to draw you that you may come, (for there is no Coming to him, but by Strength from him ;) and with full purpose of Heart cleave to him when come ; for, without it, you would not be receiv'd though you did come, for you come before you are call'd, and shall be sent away as you come.

Now

To the Reader.

*Now that what is here Published may be
Read and Bless'd to an effectual prevailing
with Sinners, to turn from Sin to God; so
from Sin, as never more to turn to it, and
so to God, as never willingly to turn away
from him; is the sincere Desire*

Of your Friend and Servant

in our Lord.

*April, 5th.
1698.*

F. Fuller.

ERRATA

ERRATA.

PAge 3. Line 14. for *yet* read *that*, p.
8. l. 1. after *for* r. *first of all*, p.
13. l. 8. r. *it is* before *the*, p. 14. l. 23.
r. *for* before *what*, p. 15. l. 15. r. *through-*
out, p. 37. l. 26. for *how* r. *what*, p. 45.
l. 9. for *the* r. *who*, p. 49. l. 6. after *not*
r. *that*, p. 70. l. 19. r. *they*.

Correcta

These Books lately Printed for
Tho. Parkhurst.

Discourses upon the Rich Man and *Lazarus*. By Mr. *Tim. Cruso*.

There is now Published, those two scarce and excellent Books the Fountain of Life opened, in Forty Two Sermons. And a Treatise of the Soul of Man, in 4to. Both by the Late Reverend and Learned Mr. *John Flavel* Minister of the Gospel at *Dartmouth*.

Mr. *Howes* Sermon on the Day of Thanksgiving.

———— His Sermon for Reformation of Manners.

———— His Sermon at the Funeral of Mr. *Rich. Adams*, M. A.

The great Duty and comfortable Evidence, keeping our selves from our Iniquity, open'd and applied. By *John Whitlock* Minister of the Gospel in *Nottingham*.

A Perswasive to full Communion with the Churches of Christ in all Gospel-Ordinances and Priviledges. By the Late Reverend Mr. *George Day* Minister of the Gospel in *London-street* in *Ratcliff*.

A short History of the Late War between King *William*, the *Confederates* and the *French King*.

SERMON I.

Of Conversion to God.

JER. III. 22. latter part.

*Behold we come unto Thee! For Thou
art the Lord our God.*

THERE are several earnest Exhortations by the Prophet in this Chapter, to sollicit and persuade the unfeigned Conversion of a sinful People to God. As *ver. 1.* again; *ver. 7.* then *ver. 12.* and lastly in this *ver. 22.* which represents a kind of Dialogue between God and the People of the *Jews*; his Speech to them in the former Part of the Verse, and their Reply to him in the latter Part of it; What he says, is full of Kindness and Affection; What they say, is expressive of their Duty and Submission.

1. What *God* says, This contains a Precept and a Promise. A Precept, *Return you*

B

back-

backsliding Children: A Promise, And I will heal your Backsliding.

2. What the People say ; both with Reference to the Act it self, *Behold we come unto Thee ;* and the Reason of it, *For thou art the Lord our God.*

Whether the Jews were ever really prevailed with to do after this Manner, by the Ministry of the Prophet, is very doubtful ; or whether this were a Prophecy concerning the Time to come ; (though it be spoken in the Time present here, and in the Time past, *ver. 21. A Voice was heard, &c.*) is also questionable : But this is certain, that the Prophet speaking in the Name of this People, in the close of the Verse, as he had done in the Name of God, in the beginning of it, sets down what was proper and meet to be said : As when *Israel* was admonish'd, *To return to the Lord their God, Hos. 14. 1.* Words were put into their Mouths, fit to take with them at their return, *ver. 2.* So here, the Command being given for their Return, here is a plain Instruction what they should Answer, which would be as a Testimony against them, if they refused to do it.

Obf. 'Tis a blessed Thing, when Sinners are effectually inclined to come to God in Obedience to his Precept ; and upon the Encouragement of his Promise. Here,

I. Shew

1. Shew what it is for Sinners to come to God?

2. How they should do it in Obedience to the Precept, and upon the Encouragement of the Promise.

3. Wherein lies the Blessedness of this.

4. The Use.

I. *What is it for Sinners to come to God?*

Ans. It does not imply any change of natural Place, secular Employment, or Civil Relation, but of spiritual State.

There are three Things especially in it.

1. *A Relinquishing of every Thing that is contrary to God, and ~~we~~ keeps us at a distance ^{from} him.* To come to God, and bring our Lusts along with us, and design the retaining of them, is utterly inconsistent; 'tis an aggravated Abomination, as if we had a mind to unite *God* and *Belial*, or to bring about an Agreement between Heaven and Hell, which is as impossible as to travel *East* and *West* at the same Time. Whenever the Spirit Works an Inclination in any Soul to return to God, there is also wrought a sincere Desire of Separation from every Sin. There's nothing more plain and evident, through the Scripture than this is, *Isa. 55. 7. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, &c.* All returning supposes and includes an abandoning of that

which is offensive and displeasing to him, to whom we return; *Ezek. 18. 31. Cast away from you all your Transgressions, whereby you have transgressed, &c.* If a Rebel intend to submit to his Sovereign Prince, he will not come with the Weapons of his Rebellion into his Princes Presence, but leave them behind him. That Grace which turns the Heart towards God, does always set the Heart against all fleshly and worldly Lusts: It no sooner seeks to have to do with *him*, but 'tis made truly willing to have no more to do with *them*.

2. *A making use of Christ as the Way to God.* Christ is so, and must be used as such, by every returning Sinner that would prosper in his Way. God is inaccessible without a Mediator; He opens the Passage betwixt God and us, which Sin and Wrath had shut up; he enables us to come, though lamed by the Fall, sets us on our Feet and holds up our goings. We must look to *Christ* as the giver of *Repentance*, as well as of *Forgiveness*, *Acts 5. 31.*

Two Things ought to be seriously considered and imprest upon our Minds in this Case.

1. That there would have been no place for *Repentance*, if *Christ* had not interposed with his Blood. Repentance would have signified nothing, if he had not purchased Forgiveness. The Penitent would have been as far off from Pardon, as the most Impenitent,

nitent, if that Pardon had not been meritoriously obtained by the Death of Christ.

2. There never would have been any Principle or Exercise of Repentance, if Christ did not produce it by his Spirit. The natural hardness of every Heart excludes the least Dispositions to sound and saving Repentance, till he hath softened and subdued it: Therefore *Christ* must be eyed as making us what God requires us to be, for our Repentance is not only accepted on the account of his *Sufferings*, but acted by vertue of his *Grace*.

3. *A giving up of our selves to God, and resting in him as our End.* The Scope of a Sinners coming to God, is not answered, without entire and absolute Resignation. When we come to God it is in order to our being disposed and governed by him, as he thinks fit; not doing our own Pleasure but being Subject to his. Except we *yield our selves to God*, Rom. 6. 13. we do not really and heartily Return to him; for by our return we pretend to acknowledge the *right* which he hath in us, and the *wrong* which we have done to him, by living so long without him, and in Enmity against him. If the Sinner do not resolve to make the Will of God the standing rule of his future Practice, he does but affront God and deceive himself with a mock Repentance. Whosoever hath been in Dominion heretofore, it must be only allowed to God for

Time to come, and to him unreservedly. And wheresoever we have rambl'd and strayed in the vain pursuit of Happiness and Satisfaction, like those that have *forgotten their resting Place*, Jer. 50. 6. We are to make a final stop at our coming to God, and look no further. Here we are to sit down and fix, as having found that Good which is incomparably the best, and most worthy to be chosen: For he that can ever think of removing from God, with hopes of mending his Condition, is a wretched Hypocrite, and hath not returned in good Earnest.

II. *How should Sinners come to God, in Obedience to the Precept, and upon the Encouragement of the Promise?* For this penitent Profession here in the Text is brought in, as the issue and result of both.

I. How must they come in *Obedience* to the *Precept*? God calls to them to return; In what manner are they to do it, with respect to his Call?

I Answer in two Things.

I. Sinners are to come to God *humbly*; and that in Consideration of the Command of God, upon two Accounts.

I. *All Acts of Obedience to God are to be performed with Humbleness of Mind.* 'Tis becoming a Creature as being under Authority, though innocent and sinless. Pride of Heart

Heart is enough to corrupt the best service of the holiest Angel in Heaven. Inordinate lifting up, was the fatal casting down and Condemnation of the Devil. It is an Honour to a Creature to receive any Commands from its Maker, and obey them; but this Honour is to be worn with Humility; we are in our best Estate so much below God, that we are unworthy of being employed or commanded by him; and so long as *Adam* retain'd his Integrity, he was sensible of this.

2. *Returning to God after former Acts of Disobedience, requires special Humiliation.* So it follows here, *ver. 25. We lye down in our shame, and our Confusion covereth us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God, and have not obeyed his Voice.* A sincere Convert must needs be struck with shame, under a Sense of his wicked Departings. We cannot reflect, how we have transgressed without Cause, and run away from God without Provocation, but that we must see abundance of Reason for the deepest Self-abasement. We cannot say, that we ever found any Iniquity in God, but we have a great deal to charge upon our selves; all the Commands which we have broken have been just, and therefore an humbling Conviction of our Guilt is necessary.

2. *We are to come to God readily.* Instantly with all the haste and speed we can, or else the Precept does not sway us in our

coming as it ought to do; for ~~if~~ we are born under a Law to God, his Commands oblige us as soon as we have a Being. We can name no Time wherein 'tis not the Duty of the Sinner to return to God, therefore the least delay is increased Disobedience. And disobedience to the *present Call* is no more excusable then disobedience to the *next*, if you should ever have another. We are as much bound to come *now*, as at any other season. The Authority of God enjoining it, should be Argument enough with us, and that Argument we have now, consequently, if we will hear his Voice; defer not hearing of that till *to Morrow*, which should be heard *to Day*. When God is so kind to admit your Return, there is no Reason that he should wait for it.

2. We are further off from Coming to God, the longer we go on in Sin: The Command will have so much the less Force upon us, the more dilatory we are in our Obedience to it. If every Sinner in the World, would ingenuously declare his own Experience, he could not deny the Truth of this; his own Conscience tells him that he finds it so to be. Every Days Sins put him at a greater distance from God, and beget a greater Backwardness and Aversion to return. He that tarries till *hereafter*, will be more unwilling *then*, than he is *now*. Who can tell but that your Presumption now, may be then changed into Despair, and the same.

same Tempter that now suggests that 'tis too soon, may then tell you that it is too late ?

2. How must they come upon the *Encouragement* of the *Promise* ?

God says, he will heal the Sinners Backslidings, whatsoever, or how many soever they have been. In what Manner should they come with Relation to this,

Answ. In two Things : With *Faith* and *Joy*.

1. Sinners are to come to God *Believingly*, with regard to the *Promise* : For these two Reasons.

1. If *Faith* be not the Spring of all our Motions towards God, they cannot be acceptable to him. You cannot provoke God more, then by making him a Lyar, which is the Language and Tendency of Unbelief, 1 *John* 5. 10. To come to him with distrustful Apprehensions of him, is to cast as foul a Reproach upon him as is possible to be raked out of the bottomless Pit. He that comes to God must Believe or he cannot be welcome ; he must believe *in God* as more ready to Forgive, than he is to Repent in his best and most melting frame ; he must believe *in Christ* as one who has more Power to save, than all his Sin hath to destroy.

2. The Promise does encourage such a Faith, as much as we need or can desire.

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Besides his gracious Entreaties, affectionate Offers, importunate Pleadings, you have his positive Assurances that he will receive you, if you return, 2 Cor. 6. 17. He cannot reject you without denying of himself; his Word belongs to every one alike that laies hold of it, and it will as certainly be verified and fulfilled to *you*, as ever it was to *any*. You may as well Question, whether ever God embraced one Sinner that came to him as doubt of your own Reception, upon your compliance with his Call. Unless you think that he hath excluded *all*, why should you suspect that he will cast out *you*?

2. Sinners must come *Joyfully* to God. The Promise is ground of rejoycing, as well as of Hope and Trust; and God never designed, that our Sorrow for Sin should be so extream, as to stifle or drown the *Joy* of Conversion. This will appear, if we consider.

1. That *God who makes the Promise, rejoyces in the Performance.* The Scripture does not barely say, that he will save, but that *he will rejoyce over thee with Joy*, Zeph. 3. 17. Even *over thee*, that has sinfully grieved his Spirit so many thousand Times over. A lost Sheep is a pleasant Load to a Man that hath found it, and laies it on his Shoulders, he does it *rejoycing*, Luke 15. 15. So 'tis pleasant Work to God to fetch home a rebellious Sinner, and when returned to lay him in his Bosom. If his *Patience* could bear
so

so long with thy Sins, guess how delightful the Exercise of his *Mercy* must be, upon thy Repentance. And should not that which is his Joy, be much more *Ours* ?

2. *We who have the Benefit of the Promise, must needs be still doubtful of it, if we do not Rejoyce in it.* If we search to the bottom in this Case, we shall find that 'tis *Infidelity* which cramps our Joy ; this makes the Sinner come drooping and trembling to God, when he should come (as that *Lame Man* entred with the Apostles into the Temple, after they had healed him. *Acts* 3. 8.) *leaping and praising*, triumphing and glorying in the Lord. How can we think of being received by God, after so long and hainous a Revolt, but that it must ravish our Hearts, if we believed it to be true ? If we had Faith suitable to the faithfulness of God, it would transport the Soul into an Extasie, that we who have lifted up our Heels so oft against God, should be taken into his Arms.

III. *Wherein lies the Blessedness of this ?* When Sinners are thus effectually inclined to come to God ; When the Precept and Promise work so upon them, as to influence their actual Return.

1. When a Sinner comes back to God, he is brought out of a most miserable Wilderness Condition, wherein if he had remained he must have perished. Instead of
faring

faring better or so well any where else, as with God, no Sinner can stay where he is, remote from God, without inevitable Destruction. If he sits still he must dye; there's no way of escape. How secure and prosperous soever Men be for the present, yet they are indeed lost and undone, if they do not return to *God*; for all the World cannot defend them against God, nor make them Happy in the want of him.

1. *They cannot defend them against God.* Who or what can deliver out of his Hand? If his Wrath be kindled who can quench it? He in his Anger overturns the Mountains, as firm as they are, with more ease than we can move a Feather, *Job 9. 5.* What Created Power is great enough to grapple with Omnipotence? Whither can we fly for help, when Almighty Revenge is following of us?

2. *They cannot make Happy in the want of God.* The whole World would be a sorry Recompence and a poor Supply, for any one Man that were to live without God in it. The thirsty Soul cannot take its fill at such broken Cisterns, but its Thirst will continue, unless it have recourse to the Fountain. Set *God* aside, and every thing else is as nothing, and will leave Men unsatisfied.

2. When a Sinner comes to God, *Salvation* comes to him. As Christ said to *Zaccheus*, *Luke. 19. 9.* *This Day is Salvation come to this House,* &c. Sound Conversion
and

and certain Salvation are inseparable; they never were, nor ever can be divided. He that hath heartily renounced his Sin, and is returned to God, is from that Time forward an apparent Heir of Salvation; and may be numbred with the saved of the Lord. *Unto us which are saved, &c. 1 Cor. i. 18.* Salvation is either *Final*, or *Initial*; the same *Salvation*, only distinguishd as to order of Time, wherein 'tis gradually wrought and carried on: Final Salvation is the Priviledge of the glorified Saint, Initial Salvation is the Portion of the new-born Convert, both run into one; he that is saved *Initially* shall be saved *Finally*; Salvation truly begun, will be Salvation fully compleated. Every Babe in Christ hath the real *first Fruits of the Spirit*, Rom. 8. 2. And he that hath those first Fruits cannot fail of the Harvest of Glory. Salvation takes in all Spiritual Blessings at once, and Eternal Blessings are chained to them. Every Child of God as soon as he returns to his Duty, hath a Title given him to all the Riches of his Fathers House; he may look up to Heaven and say, I have a large Inheritance there, which Earth and Hell cannot deprive me of.

3. When a Sinner comes home to God, all his fellow *Creatures* shall be some way or other serviceable to him; either willingly and gladly, or by constraint and over-ruling Necessity. The whole Creation is on Gods side, and will take Part with him against his Adver-

Adversaries ; so that no Creature can be at Peace with us, till we are reconciled to him ; but after that, they all immediately turn to be our Friends ; or at the least, all the Enmity which we meet with, shall be turned to our Advantage. Either *nothing shall hurt us*, as Christ told his Disciples ; *Luke 10. 19.* or the hurt which we receive shall be requited with a far greater and more excellent Good. Angels above us will encamp round about us, be ministring to us, and do all the friendly Offices for us, that we can wish to have done. The best of Men who are Creatures of the same order and rank with us, are all for our use so far as we shall need them ; and as for Devils and the worst of Men, we shall have Gods Protection from their Malice, or his Influence to sanctifie us by it.

4. When a Sinner is come to God, he may visit God by *Prayer* in all his Necessities, and be sure of sufficient Relief. He may *for* go afterwards to the Throne of Grace, whatever he lacks freely and boldly, and shall never be treated as a Stranger, nor sent away empty. To have Liberty of doing this in any peculiar extraordinary Strait, would be a mighty Favour ; but what a Priviledge must it be to do it always, every Day, upon every occasion, and to know that God will not be wearied, but rather pleased and delighted with our continual coming. It is a proud mistake for any Creature to think that

that they can live of themselves, though it was that which the *Jews* stand arraigned for; *Jer. 2. 31. Wherefore say my People, we are Lords, we will come no more to Thee?* They might better have said, we are *Beggars*, and cannot subsist without coming to thee. This is indeed our Case, and therefore 'tis well for us, that we are not debarred from Coming; yea we are invited to come as often as we will, and the oftner we come, the better we succeed; this is the Happiness of a Sinner after his Conversion, but not before it.

5. A Sinner that is come to God, may sweetly walk and *Converse with God*, throughout the residue of his Life; and the benefit and sweetness of such Communion is not to be imagined by those that have it not, they that are far from God can be no Judges of the Blessedness of those that are near unto him. The Presence of God is a glorious Priviledge which can never be valued high enough, even by them that do possess it; none can tell what a blessed Thing it is, to be able to say, as the Psalmist does, *I am continually with Thee*, Psalm 73. 23. When I lye down, when I rise up, when I go out, when I come in, when Providence smiles upon me, and when it frowns, when I enjoy the outward Mercies that are most desirable, when I suffer the outward Afflictions that are most uneasie; *I am still with God*. So long as my Sin is put away, nothing now can separate

me from him; on the other Hand, while Sin remains, there can be no such Fellowship; in whatsoever State I am, 'tis most certain, that I am *absent from God*, a meer Out-cast, a Fugitive, a Vagabond, like *Cain* excluded from all amicable Correspondence with him.

6. A Sinner that is come to God, may go to him with Comfort and Confidence at *Death*, whether sooner or later, *when a few Years* (it may be Days or Minutes) *are come, then I shall go the Way whence I shall not return*, Job 16. 22. We must in a little while go to God, *as a Judge*, whether we will or not, and immediately thereupon our Everlasting State will be unalterably fixt, and what is not done before is impossible to be done after it. Now none are prepared to go to God *as a Judge*, but what are first returned to him as a *Father*; and what an unspeakable Mercy is it to be so prepared? With how much Peace and Quietness may a Man pass the Time of his Sojourning here, that hath no Reason to be afraid of departing hence? The *Terror of Dying* makes it a *Bondage to Live*; but when once God hath received a Sinner through Christ, the Grounds of those Fears are taken away; such a one may at any Time leave the World, and go forth out of the Body, with a chearful undaunted Spirit in the same Hope that the Psalmist had, *For God shall receive me*, Psalm 49. 15.

IV. Use.

1. This shews that they who will not come to God are not come to themselves. So soon as the Prodigal came to himself, he presently Thought of returning to his Father, *Luke 15. 17.* When *Nebuchadnezzar's* Understanding returned to him, he Blessed the most High, and Praised and Honoured him that liveth for ever, *Dan. 4. 34.* He had lived like a *Bruit* before, and so do all that are alienated from God, and turn their backs upon him. Religion makes us mad in their Esteem, but the want of it makes them truly so. They think that we who urge their Conversion are *besides ourselves*, but 'tis a Sign that they are *so indeed*, because they will not hearken.

2. Ministers will have a dreadful and unpleasing Account to give of those, whom they leave unperswaded. Our Time is short and the Hour is coming, when we must leave this Work of Beseeching, and Pressing, and Arguing with you, and go to him that sent us, with a faithful account of the Issue of our Message. 'Tis against our Minds, against our Prayers, against the whole Purpose of our Ministry, to accuse any of you to the Father: But we must do it, if you will not prevent it by hearing and obeying. It will be a Melancholy thing and Matter of Grief, *Heb. 13. 7.* For one that hath laboured in this Gospel to stand forth at the great Day,

and produce no Fruits; Here we are, but they that were bidden and invited in thy Name by us refused to come. We warned, we begg'd, we did what we could, but they would not yield, and we were forced to leave them as we found them in their Sins.

3. God will be justified in their *Condemnation*, to whom his Precepts and Promises avail nothing. To entertain such gracious Offers with such shameful Contempt, is a Sin which cannot be revenged with excessive Severity. If any of you did but make a serious Tryal, and God would not receive you when you come to him, you might have a Plea for your going back again; but when God comes forth to you with Salvation in his Hand, and Compassion in his Heart, you that never tried can have nothing to say for sleighting it.

4. The Devil can lay no blocks in our Way against our coming unto God, but what we may easily remove or courageously leap over, if we look no further than this Text. Hath not God warranted our coming by his *Precept*, and encouraged it by his *Promise*? Hath he not commanded us to return, and engaged to heal us? What would we have him to say which he hath not said?

Obj. If I were sure he were *my God* I would come.

Ans. 1. If thou *desirest* that he should be *thine*, if thou *choosest* him to be *thine*, he is so.

2. If

2. If thou *Consentest* to be *his*, he is undoubtedly *thine*.

3. Though thou canst not regularly claim him as *thine*, while thou art at a distance from him, yet *in thy coming*, thou mayst lay thy Claim. There is a Propriety and Interest in God transferred to Thee in that very Moment.

5. How unreasonable would it be, if any of the Storms we meet with in our Way to God, should ever drive us back, or shipwreck our Faith! When *Peter* was coming to Christ upon the Water, the Wind grew boisterous, and he began to sink, but Christ caught him and saved him.

So when we are upon our Return to God, 'tis no wonder if we find Disturbance and Opposition, and a great many things to pull us back, and scare us from going forwards. The Master whom we have served so many Years is unwilling to part with us, and therefore will create all the difficulties, and represent the utmost dangers which he can; but Gods good and comfortable Word should weigh down all: And when so many have done well, why should any one of us imagine that he shall be *the first rejected Person*?

6. How Happy would it be, if the *Efficacy* of this Doctrine were equal to the *Concernment* of it! It extends to *All* that are born into the World, and therefore should operate upon all likewise. All *Adams* Posterity are a brood of Backsliders, vile Apostate Creatures, that have universally
C 2 gone

gone aside, and straggled and wandered from God, and therefore all are bound without Distinction, to agree and joyn in this dutiful Profession, *Behold we come unto thee.*

If this whole Assembly would Eccho so to this Sermon, it would be the most joyful found that ever I heard. The Spirit and the Word this Day say come; and if every one that heareth did also say, *Lo I come,* it would be the best Sabbath that ever I saw. Not that it is enough to say, *we come,* unless we do it; he that said *I go and went not,* stood condemned out of his own Mouth, *Mat. 21. 30.*

But such Words accompanied with our Hearts, and accomplisht in our Practice, are the best which can be uttered by any Tongue on Earth.

SERM.

SERMON II.

Of Establishment.

ACTS XI. 23. latter part.

And exhorted them all, that with purpose of Heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.

IT is no small Instance of the Wisdom of Providence, that God hath always over-ruled the Malice of the Devil, to be a means of accomplishing the Designs of his own Grace: About the Time of *Stephens* Death, (who was the *first Martyr* in the New Testament Church) there arose so violent a Storm of Persecution, that it dispersed the Church which was at *Jerusalem*, and only the Apostles were left to keep Possession for Christ of the Gospel there; but this happen'd to the furtherance of that, which Satan intended to stifle and obstruct; for they that were scattered abroad, *Went every where Preaching the Word*, Chap. 8. 4. We find some of this number arrived at *Antioch*, ver. 19, 20. of this Chapter, and they had great success in their Work there,

for the *Hand of the Lord was with them*, a Divine Power accompanied their Ministry, and Multitudes believed, and turned to the Lord, *ver. 21.* The Church at *Jerusalem* hearing of this, take care to send *Barnabas* thither, *ver. 22.* A Man whom the Apostles gave that Name to, which signifies, a *Son of Consolation*, Chap. 4. 36. And a Man of Note and good Reputation among the Apostles, as appears Chap. 9. 27. And one that hath an excellent Character here, *ver. 24.* *A good Man and full of the Holy Ghost, and of Faith.* This is the Man that is dispatcht to these Christians at *Antioch*, and this, *ver. 23.* gives us an Account of the Issue of his coming, *Who when he came, and had seen the Grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of Heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.* The whole may be sum'd up, under three General Heads.

1. What he saw [*and had seen the Grace of God*] that is, the visible Fruits and Effects of it, in their Holy Conversation and Godliness, and wheresoever the Grace of God is truly planted and deeply rooted in the Heart, it will discover and evidence it self by suitable Workings in the Life: 'Tis a Seed which will spring up, a Light which will shine, and a Fire which will flame, more or less, to the view of others.

2. How he was affected with what he saw [*was glad*] he did not Envy or Repine, but Rejoice. The successful progress of the Gospel, and saving Efficacy upon those that hear

hear it, is Matter of Joy to Holy Souls. It is a mighty Addition to their own Comfort, when they see others brought home to God by the Word. The encrease of the Body is acceptable to all the Members.

3. His Exhortation grounded hereupon. [*And exhorted them all that with purpose of Heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.*] There are three Particulars in this.

1. The Act *Cleave*, *προσμένειν*, which some render continue or abide in; the Sense of both is the same.

2. The Object, *to the Lord*. That is, to Christ, who is usually to be understood by that Title in the New Testament.

3. The Manner, *with purpose of Heart*. The same Word which we translate Purpose here, is used to express the Eternal and Immutable Decree of God, concerning the Salvation of his Elect, *Rom.* 8. 28. *Eph.* 3. 11. 2 *Tim.* 1. 9.

Obs. *Resolved cleaving to Christ, or cleaving with purpose of Heart is the proper and necessary Duty of those that are already Converted to him.* Here,

1. Shew, how we are to cleave to Christ.
2. What it is to do this, with purpose of Heart.
3. Why is this the Duty of all that are Converted to him.
4. *Use.*

1. *How are we to cleave to Christ?*

1. We must cleave to the Person of Christ, by a continued Life of Faith upon him. Thus *Hezekiah* trusted in the Lord God of Israel, and in that respect is said to cleave to him, *2 Kings* 18. 5, 6. This is the Foundation Grace, and the daily Exercise of it is highly requisite. Besides, our first receiving of Christ whereby we are united to him, we must be often renewing our Applications to Christ, and Dependencies upon him. As the Traitor *Judas*, when he gave that Sign to the Officers, *Whomsoever I shall Kiss, that same is he*, bid them to hold him fast, *Mat.* 26. 48. So it may be said to all those that have apprehended Christ, and are apprehended of him, hold him Fast; take fresh hold, and further hold of him every Day. The Faith of Adherence and Recumbence must be acted, whatever Circumstances we be in; whether clear or cloudy, calm or stormy.

There are two Considerations which should enforce this with us,

1. The mischievous workings of Unbelief in our own Hearts. This Infirmary sometimes prevails too much, where there is the greatest Strength of Grace. Eminent Saints that have been lifted up to the Heaven of Assurance, have fallen from thence almost (though not altogether) into the Hell of Despair; they that have triumphed in Christ,
and

and thought their Interest in him past all Question, have been ready afterwards to renounce all their Confidence and Comfort, as Men ashamed of their Hope. This shews how the Leprosie of *Infidelity* cleaves to us like a stubborn Disease, and will be breaking out, unless we are careful to keep it under by constant actual Believing.

2. The subtle and dangerous Insinuations of the Devil. His business is to beat us off from our hold, to loosen us from Christ, and persuade us to let him go. And without great Caution and Diligence on our Part, he will get ground upon us: What he cannot do by his Rage, he frequently accomplishes by his Cunning: As the false Teachers falsely suggested to the *Corinthians*, concerning *Paul*, that *being crafty he caught them with Guile*, 2 Cor. 12. 16. Satan labours to discourage many a Saint, from cleaving to Christ by urging that his Iniquities have separated between Christ and him; whereas no Sin can really separate where Faith unites.

2. We must cleave to the *Truth and Doctrine of Christ*, by a steady acknowledgment and Profession of them. It is as much our Duty to retain them, as it is to embrace them at the first. When God has brought us to the Knowledge of the Truth, as it is in Jesus; we must take heed of being led away by contrary Errors. Errors in the Plural, for they are manifold, though Truth is but one, and this as a sacred Trust which is deli-

delivered to the Saints to keep, *Prov. 23. 23. Buy the Truth and Sell it not.* We are to endeavour the getting of it by all the Means we can; but not to part with it at any Rate, or upon any Terms whatever. The Doctrine of Christ in all the Branches of it, ought to be precious to us, as well as Christ himself. As the Fragments of a Miraculous Entertainment, so the least parts of Divine Revelation are not to be lost. If the whole Counsel of God was worthy of his declaring, 'tis worthy of our asserting. It was the Commendation which Christ gave to the Church in *Pergamos*, *Rev. 2. 13. Thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my Faith,* (with this remarkable Circumstance) *even in those Days wherein Antipas my faithful Martyr was slain among you.* So to the Church in *Philadelphia*; *Thou hast kept my Word, and hast not denyed my Name*; though she had but a little Strength, yet it was well improved, *Chap. 3. 8.* If the Name, and Word, and Faith of Christ be relinquished by us, we do really abandon *him*; we cannot adhere to him, and give up any thing that is his, that hath been revealed and taught by him, or by those that were sent by him, or any thing that carries his Mark and Impression upon it.

3. We must cleave to the *Ways of Christ*; that is, *his Commandments and Ordinances.*

1. To his Commandments by strict Obedience. In this Sense we find *cleaving to God* several Times enjoined, *Dent. 11. 22.*
and

and 13. 4. *Josh.* 22. 5. All Divine Precepts as they have a never failing Authority, ought to have an abiding influence; They are a fixed Rule, and they challenge our settled regard. *Bind them continually upon thine Heart*, *Prov.* 6. 21. They should be ever with us, and ever before us. They are not to be observed now and then, performed at one Time, and neglected at another; but we are to walk in *them at all times*; and at no Time to go back from them. This suits with the honourable Character which *Paul* gives of his *Philippians*, *Chap.* 2. 12. *You have always obeyed.* They that do not make Conscience of obeying *always*, are truly Children of disobedience; if we are *under a Law to Christ*, we can never imagine our selves to be *without Law to God*.

2. To his *Ordinances*, by a Religious use of them in their various Seasons. And thus cleaving to God is sometimes prest with respect to Matters of *Worship*, and in Opposition to strange Gods, *Dent.* 10. 20. *Josh.* 23. 7, 8. We do not indeed cleave to Christ, if we forsake any Institution of Christ, and take up with any Invention of Men. We must cleave to him as *the Lord over his own House*, invested with Sovereign and incommunicable Power, to dispose and order whatsoever shall be done in it. The disuse of any Holy Appointment of his, is a degree of Apostacy from the Author. They that have Solemnly given up themselves, and their Names

to Christ, by personal Covenanting with him at his Table, are especially Guilty in this Case, if they afterwards withdraw from it, or attend it uncertainly. It argues great forgetfulness of Christ, and our Engagements unto him, not to do that stately in Remembrance of him.

4. We must cleave to the People of Christ. He directs his Spouse to go forth by the Footsteps of the Flock, Song 1. 8. Not to follow them afar off, but to joyn and associate with them and never to quit, or divide from them. They vainly hope to enjoy Communion with Christ, that leave the Communion of Saints, Zech. 8. 23. *Ten Men out of the Languages of all Nations, shall take hold of the Skirt of a Jew, saying, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.* It seems to be a Gospel Prophecy drest up in Old Testament Phrases, and refers to the embodying of the Gentiles with the Christian Church. The peculiar Presence of Christ is with his People, and they go out from that presence, that separate themselves from that People. We must not do like the Samaritans of old, who were wont to own a Relation to the Jews in their Prosperity, and disclaimed it in their Adversity; but whatsoever their External Condition be, the living Temples of God are to be preferred to all the gaudy and pompous Synagogues of Satan. Moses his choice of suffering Affliction with the People of God: Heb. 11. 25. Is a Pattern to us, if they wander in Deserts, in Mountains,

tains, in Dens and Caves of the Earth, 'tis best to be with them. Where they go and lodge we should also, as we desire that their God should be our God.

II. *What is it to cleave to Christ with purpose of Heart?* I Answer in three Things.

1. It implies a deliberate Act of the Judgment. Every rational Purpose is established by Counsel, Prov. 20. 18. It is founded upon Reason, or else we may expect it to be disappointed and overthrown. He that resolutely cleaves to Christ, is first supposed to sit down, and seriously consider why he does so; for if he be not convinc'd that he ought to do it, and if he do not proceed to resolve upon those grounds, all will come to nothing. Therefore when the King of *Babylon* out of his peculiar Favour to some of the Children of the Captivity, appointed them a daily Provision of his Meat and Wine, 'tis said that the Prophet *Daniel* purposed in his Heart, that he would not defile himself with the Portion of the Kings Meat, nor with the Wine which he drank, Dan. 1. 8. This was not obstinacy or humor in him, or a foolish stiffness without a Cause, for he had weighed the Matter and found that he could not do it without Pollution; For First, The *Babylonians* freely eat of many Things forbidden to the *Jews*. Secondly, 'Tis probable that many Times they eat of things offered to their Idols. Thirdly, Such riotous living

and

and pampering of the Flesh, could not be excused from Sin at any Time. *Fourthly*, It was much more unbecoming any of the Seed of *Israel*, in their present Circumstances in a strange Land. Thus *Daniel's Purpose* to abstain was an Act of *Judgment*, upon due Deliberation with himself; so must our purpose of continuing with Christ be; that we may do it with all our Mind, and with all our Understanding.

2. It includes a determinate Act of the *Will*: When after debating of the Thing in our own Thoughts, we come to a final Issue, the Will gives positive Sentence that it shall be so. This is called *decreeing in the Heart*, 1 Cor. 7. 37. Thus *David* says, *I am purposed that my Mouth shall not Transgress*, Psalm 17. 3. Which we have in other words, Psalm 39. 1. *I said, I will take heed to my Ways, that I Sin not with my Tongue*, &c. To say in our Hearts, that we will do this, or that, is indeed to Purpose it. He that resolves in good earnest is no longer in suspense, whether he should or should not; he does not hang like an even Ballance, or halt between two. Thus must we cleave to Christ, with Hearts fully set in us so to do; as that *Scribe* pretended when he came to *Christ*, and said, *Master I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest*, Mat. 8. 19. If those Words had been more advisedly spoken, they had been well spoken, but by our Lords Answer, *verse 20*. It should seem as if he knew not what he said; that he dreamt of better Ac-

commo-

commodation than Christ had. If we are determined to follow Christ, the bent of the Soul must be towards him.

3. It takes in *an unwearied pursuit* of what we do resolve. All Purposes which are not duly executed, but easily broke off, are insignificant. This argues Levity of Spirit, and is styled *purposing according to the Flesh*, 2 Cor. 13. 17. Carnal Hearts never resolve any otherwise in Religious Matters; and in Carnal Things we may resolve, and yet change our Intentions without Sin. We are not necessarily obliged to do all that we sometimes say we will do; if we find Reason afterwards to revoke our Purpose, and alter our Minds, as 1 Sam. 15. 26. *Samuel said to Saul, I will not return with thee*, yet ver. 31. we read that *he returned again after Saul*. But now in this Case, of cleaving to Christ, our Purpose admits of no Revocation. There is as much Reason for our final persisting in it, as for our first Agreement to it. *That* was vain and needless, if *this* be so. Our Thoughts with respect to this Matter should be as truly unmoveable in our measure, as Gods are; of whom 'tis said, *He is of one Mind, and who can turn him*, Job 23. 13.

III. *Why is this the Duty of all, that are Converted to Christ, to cleave resolutely to him?*

1. The Sincerity of our Affection must be proved

proved by the *Stedfastness* of our *Adherence*.

'Tis a sign that we did but make a *shew* of closing with Christ, except we keep close to him. Which way soever our Faces stood, 'tis certain that our Hearts were never right, if we can be by any means influenced to turn our backs upon God again. They that at any Time wholly *fail of the Grace of God*, never knew it *in Truth*. Your Conversion was but a feigned thing, or you could not be guilty of a total Revolt, *Heb. 3. 6. Whose House are we, if we hold fast the Confidence, and rejoycing of Hope firm unto the End.* All that are an Habitation for Christ, are distinguished by this Token; lively Stones have such a Conjunction with the Head of the Corner, that they cannot drop out of the Building. Branches that are in Christ by real Union, always abide in Christ, and Christ in them; but others wither and dye, and fall off from him. That Profession which is not crowned with Perseverance, is tainted with Hypocrisie; for they that come to Christ in the uprightness of their Souls, cannot break away from him.

2. 'Tis *base Ingratitude* to shake off Christ, who is so true and faithful to you. His forsakings of you are never but in Appearance only, His Promise is sure; *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, *Heb. 13. 5.* He is with Believers always, but sometimes hid and unknown, so that they discern him not; but if he were not with them, the whole Work of God would cease, and be destroyed immediately.

ately. He is careful to supply the want of his bodily Presence, by his Spirit, whom he not only promised to send, but engaged for his Abode with us for ever, *John* 14. 16. He does not call back this Spirit, when you sinfully grieve him, nor deliver you up to your own Lusts, when you provoke him so to do. He holds you in his hand still, when there are Legions of Devils banded together, to pluck you out; and do you thus requite him, to wrest your selves out? 'Tis too foul a Thing to be done by any of those, that are *truly his*; but they that *are not*, will reward his greatest kindness, at one Time or other with the vilest Treachery.

3. If you do not cleave to Christ, *you let go all your Happiness at once.* As *Moses* said to *Israel*, *Deut.* 30. 20. *That thou mayst cleave to him, for he is thy Life, and the length of thy Days,* q. d. You are dead Men if you depart from him, he had given them an Instance of this, *Chap.* 4. 3, 4. *All the Men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you; but you that did cleave unto him are alive every one of you this Day.* We are no longer safe than we abide with God; as soon as we leave him, we expose our selves to the utmost Misery, in that very Moment. Therefore when many Disciples went back, and he put it to the Twelve, *Will ye also go away?* Peter makes an excellent Answer, *Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the Words of Eternal Life,* *John* 6. 67, 68. q. d. What we have left to follow thee,

was less than nothing, but if we should forsake thee, we must Part with more than all; we who have counted every Thing but loss for thee, can reckon nothing to be gain without thee.

4. The *longer* you cleave to Christ, the *more pleasant* it will be, and at the close of all, it will be impossible to repent your Choice; while you are following on to know the Lord, you will find cause to like your Way the better; and the improving of your acquaintance with Christ, will encrease your Delight in him. Go to those that have had most *Experience* of the Grace of Christ, to old Disciples that have had their standing in Christ, for the largest number of Years, and they will tell you, that they are 'still every Day further off, from repenting that they were added to the Lord and to the Church. The seeming grievousness of Religious Duties wears away, when the Heart comes to be exercised in them. Christs Yoke grows easier and smoother, when we have *born* it upon us; though perhaps at the very first putting on, the Flesh will strive hard to fling it off.

5. Resolution in cleaving to Christ, will carry you through *all those Difficulties* which affright and deter an *unresolvedly Man*. *Ruths* cleaving to *Naomi*, when her Sister *Orpah* returned to her People and her Gods, and notwithstanding *Naomi's* Perswasions to her to return, shewed her to be inflexible, and made *Naomi* silent, *Ruth* 1. 18. *When she*

she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking to here : So here, if Satan find us wavering and yielding, he will press the more upon us, till he hath compassed his Design ; but if we stand unshaken against repeated Temptations, and keep our ground, it will be a discouragement to the Tempter ; a weakning of his Hands, and a strengthening of our own. *Resist the Devil and he will flee from you*, James 4. 7. But how must he be resisted? *Stedfast in the Faith*, 1 Pet. 5. 9.

6. The Time of Tryal and Exercise is short, and the Reward is near ; this makes it so much the more your Duty to hold out. You are not to spend your Eternity at such a distance from Christ, as you now are ; you are not to tarry very long in the Devils reach, yet a little while and all the danger will be over ; you will hear no more of these hellish Sollicitations to depart from Christ, when you come to Heaven ; and then will feel no more of those wretched (remaining) Propensions to it, which now you do. Be but faithful unto Death (which may not be very far off) and Death will translate you where Christ is, and all his perfected Saints with him. Let none take away your Crown now, and they cannot do it then. Cleave to Christ while you are in this Tabernacle, and you'l go out of it with Honour and Triumph. As David prayed and pleaded, *Psalms 119. 31. I have stuck to thy Testimonies, Oh Lord ! put me not to shame.*

IV. Use.

1. Learn hence, that the *Foundation* which Men lay at the *beginning* of their *Way*, needs to be *well examined*, that it may bear what is to be built upon it. I do not mean that we should always be calling our first Work into question, or making a doubt of it at every turn; but that we ought to make it sure by strict Examination and Enquiry; and whatever defects we discover, which are essential, they ought to be mended before we go any further. It is good to proceed upon a sound bottom, or else we shall not proceed far enough to attain what we hope for. If we take but a superficial hold of Christ, when we enter our selves his Disciples, we shall not perseveringly cleave to him.

2. All the Work which we have to do, is not done *at first*, how well soever that be done. *The end of a thing is better than the beginning*, Eccl. 7. 8. And this we must have a careful respect to. The new born Soul is not to take its ease, or neglect its watch, to be careless or slothful, but to be employed with all its might, till its grown up to absolute Perfection. *Wisdom is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her*, (but 'tis immediately added) and *happy is every one that retaineth her*, Prov. 3. 18. So get *Wisdom and forget it not*, Chap. 4. 5. That which is lost again, is worse than if it had never been possessed at all.

3. The

3. The *Ministers of Christ* have a great deal of *establishing*, as well as *converting Work* upon their Hands. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, when they came to *Antioch* in another Journey, spake to those that followed them and persuaded them to *continue in the Grace of God*, Acts 13. 43. So at another Time, when they returned to the Cities where they had preached the Gospel before, they confirmed the Souls of the Disciples, and exhorted them to *continue in the Faith*, Chap. 14. 22. Our business lies with Saints as well as Sinners; *Propheying serveth not for them that believe not (only) but for them which believe (also)* 1 Cor. 14. 22. We dye in Travel if Christ be not formed in you; and we cannot live, except they that are brought home, do *stand fast in the Lord*.

4. *Effectual Religious Purposes* are of extraordinary Importance. I say effectual; for as they will not suffice, where the deed may be, 2 Cor. 4. 11. So Resolution without Action will not be accepted: For it is not serious and hearty, Psalm 119. 106. *I have sworn and will perform it, &c.*

What
2. ~~How~~ shall we do that our Purposes in cleaving to Christ, may be *Effectual*.

Answ. 1. *Resolve not in your own Strength*; then you will certainly fail and miscarry, to punish your Presumption and expose your Weakness. Say with the Psalmist, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God*, Psalm 71. 16.

2. Let your *Ends* and *Motives* be right : Cleave to the Lord for his own sake; follow him not for the Loaves of temporal Advantages, lest they should abate and vanish. The Purity of our Aims, will conduce to the Stability of our Purposes.

3. Keep up an *high Valuation* and *Esteem* of *Christ* ; spiritual Beings are cemented by Love, so as to be inseparable, 1 *Sam.* 18. 1. The Soul of *Jonathan* was knit to the Soul of *David*, &c. *Shechems* Soul clave to *Dinah*, so that he would agree to any Terms upon her Account, *Gen.* 34. 3.. with 12.

4. Labour after an *increased Sense* of the *odiousness* of *Sin*. *Rom.* 12. 9. *Abhor that which is Evil, cleave to that which is good.* They are well coupled, for the more loathsome the one is, the more Tenacious shall we be of the other.

5. Sit loose from the *World*, and its *entangling Enjoyments*. The greater hold they take of us, the more apt and liable are we to be removed from *Christ*. *Solomon* clave to strange Women in Love, and they turned away his Heart from God, 1 *Kings* 11. 2, 3.

6. Let no *Example* have any influence upon you, which is against the *Rule*. When every Man of *Israel* went up from after *David*, and followed *Sheba*, the Men of *Judah* still clave to their King, 2 *Sam.* 20. 2. If you could suppose *Christ* universally renounc't, and your selves left alone in adherence to him, it would be your *Glory* to be *Singular*, and to abide Faithful.

SERMON III.

Of Consolation.

M A T. XXVIII. 5.

And the Angel answered, and said unto the Women, Fear not ye: For I know that ye seek JESUS which was Crucified.

THE foregoing Chapter gives us a large Account of the Death and Burial of Jesus Christ, and of the Care which his Enemies took to keep him fast in the Prison of the Grave; but this could not be done, for the Morning of the third Day after his Decease, which was *the first Day of the Week*, was the appointed Time of his Resurrection. Accordingly, when this Morning came, the Earth was shaken and gave up its Dead, and an Angel was dispatcht from Heaven, to roll away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, *ver. 2. of this Chap.* This Angel when he had removed the Stone, had not done all his Business, but went and sat

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upon

upon it, and appeared in such an awful manner, that the Keepers who were set to watch, trembled at the sight of him; like Men amazed and utterly dispirited, *ver. 3, 4.* Yea it seems that not only they, but the Holy Women also (mentioned, *ver. 1.*) who came with a better design to see the Sepulchre, as soon as the *Jewish Sabbath* was over, were through the Infirmary of their Flesh (though not like the Keepers, through guilt of Conscience) under some discomposing Terror. As the Disciples themselves, when they heard the Voice out of the Cloud in the Mount of Transfiguration, were sore afraid, *Mat. 17. 6.* So if these Women had not been exercised with timorous uneasie Apprehensions now, those comfortable Words which are spoken to them here in the Text, would have been altogether needless. Which I have the rather chosen at this Time to *Discourse* on; not only because they may seem to have some *Reference* to the *Ordinance* of the *Lords Supper* which is to follow; but also as the fittest I know of to *Connect* with my two Last *Discourses*; the *First* was on *Conversion*, the *Second* on *Establishment*; therefore I shall now add a *Third* on *Consolation*; and if I do by the *Blessing* of God obtain my *End* in these *Sermons*, I need *Preach no more*.

In these Words we may consider these four Things.

1. The Person speaking, *And the Angel answered and said*; those ministring Spirits are very ready, to deliver any reviving Messages to the Heirs of Salvation, that wherein they can they may be, the helpers of their Joy; as to *Zacharias*, Luke 1. 13. to *Paul*, Acts 27. 24.

2. The Persons applied to [*to the Women*,] who signalized their Affection to Christ, by attending his Last Sufferings, and by preparing Oyntments and Spices for his Dead Body, and by their early Visits at his Grave. As they loved more than others so they're favour'd more than others, with the first joyful Tidings of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. The encouraging Matter [*Fear not Ye*] There is a special Emphasis upon that word *Ye*, q. d. Let the Centinels whose work it is to Guard the Sepulchre be affrighted, if they will; but there is no such Cause for your being so: I have no Consolation to impart to them, but to *you* I have.

4. The satisfying Reason [*For I know that ye seek Jesus, who was Crucified.*] Though it be Gods peculiar Perfection to know the Hearts of his Creatures, *1 Kings* 8. 39. Yet we may know very much of the Thoughts and Intentions of others by their Actions and Deportments; and so the Angel might be able to say, he knew by the Circumstances of the Womens coming hither, what it was they came about, and whom they enquired after.

Obf. *Where any Souls do truly design the seeking of a Crucified Jesus, all disquieting fear must needs be groundless; and not a Duty, but a Fault, 'tis not that they are call'd to, but warned against. Here,*

1. I shall shew, *Who they are that truly design the seeking of a Crucified Jesus.*

2. *Why all disquieting Fears in such, must be groundless.*

3. *Whence these Fears arise.*

4. *Use.*

I. *Who they are, that truly design the seeking of a Crucified Jesus?*

Answer in six Things.

1. They that seriously look upon *Christ as most worthy to be sought, and necessary to be found*; and are therefore willing to neglect or abandon all other Things whatsoever for the sake of him. There are none that seek him in good Earnest, but such as this Character is applicable to; we must be,

1. Deeply convinc't, that nothing else doth so well *deserve* our Pains in seeking it; nor is there such an absolute and indispensable *Necessity* of finding it. We may be possesst of all other Things without Christ, and yet be miserable; we may miss or fail of all other Things, and yet be Happy in Christ. *Who so findeth him, findeth Life, &c.*

Prov.

Prov. 8. 35. He is the *one Thing needful*, and the *one Thing* to be desired; unless there be a sound and settled Conviction of this, there can be no Sincerity.

2. We must be fully resolved to pass over, and to relinquish every Thing in the World for *Christs sake*. They that choose rather to omit a season of Converse with Christ, than the Prosecution of a secular Affair, have Reason to be Jealous of their own Hypocrisie. *Martha* had a sharp rebuke for spending her Time about the Entertainment of Christ, when she should with her Sister have been hearing of him. Christ must be diligently sought, though all be forsaken in Order to it.

2. They that *make use of all the appointed Means*, and providential Opportunities, of *finding Christ*, which are put into their Hands. He that conscientiously uses *any one*, will thankfully embrace them *all*; for as the same Authority binds to, so the same goodness furnishes with, all alike. Wheresoever Christ hath been, or is to be found, we are to seek him; there is a variety of Divine Ordinances, all tending to the same Purpose, *viz.* Fellowship with Christ, but none of them are to be refused. We should follow Christ from one Ordinance to another, as the zealous Multitude did from Place to Place. *When our Lord departed privately by Ship to a Desert Place, the People that knew him seeing it, ran a-foot out of all Cities, and out-went the Ship, and came together to him,*
Mark

Mark 6. 33. They that have an hearty desire to meet with Christ will seek him in their Closets, and seek him in his Sanctuary, and above all at his Table, where his Death is solemnly Commemorated. A Crucified Jesus is there chiefly to be sought, we contradict our selves if we say, we would see Jesus, and do not go where he feeds, but avoid the Institutions which he is present in, and communicates himself by. His Enemies had so much Policy as to seek him where he frequently resorted, *John* 18. 2, 3.

3. They that are *not contented* with the *best of Means, unless they attain this End*; of the Enjoyment of Christ by them. As *David* notwithstanding his great respect to the Tabernacle, and performance of Publick Worship there, carried his Thoughts and Desires beyond it, to him that filled it with his Glory, *Psalms* 42. 1, 2. *My Soul panteth after thee oh God. My Soul thirsteth for God,* &c. As true Seekers of Jesus Christ, can have no Satisfaction in the bare Hearing of the Word of Christ, though an Angel were to Preach it; nor can such an one really Feast upon the sacred Elements which respect Christ, though the greatest Apostle were now alive to Dispense them. To an Hypocrite its enough to have the outward Means, and attend upon them; for indeed the presence or absence of Christ is an indifferent Thing to such; but to have some sweet Experience of Divine Communion, or else an afflicting Sense of the want of it, is the Mark
of

of an unfeigned Believer. Perhaps the greatest Saint upon Earth hath not always that manifest Communion with Christ, which he would have; but the least of Saints is greatly troubled and concerned when he hath it not. I will say that *Mourning and Lamenting after the Lord*, is as sure a Token of *Integrity*, as the most comfortable Enjoyment of him.

4. They that *hold on in the unwearied Pursuits of Christ*, notwithstanding all Discouragements. They that do not seek Christ heartily, will quickly cease, and give over seeking him. It is strength of Affection which makes us persevere, and continue in this Work, which otherwise would soon tire us out. When *Elijah* was snatcht up to Heaven by a whirlwind, the Sons of the Prophets at *Jericho*, suspecting lest he should be cast upon some Mountain, or into some Valley, were for sending fifty Men to seek him; and urged *Elisha* for his Consent, till he was ashamed to deny them any longer; and so the Men went and sought him three Days, but found him not, *2 Kings* 2. 16, 17. Their respect to the Man of God put them upon doing this, as a voluntary act; though they were forbidden, for *Elisha* had said you shall not send: How much more earnest and eager should we be, in seeking after Christ, when we are commanded? If we think it our Duty to begin any enquiry or search at all, we cannot but think that 'tis our Sin to desist; even tho he seem to flee from us, and to go further off, the faster we advance towards

wards him ; though he conceal and hide himself the more, the nearer we press to him.

5. They which steer the same Course which Christ did, and *walk as he walked*, are sincere Seekers of him. 'Tis a vain pretence to say, we are engaged in the pursuit of Christ, and go a contrary Way ; if we would find him out where he is, we must undoubtedly tread in his Steps. As some quick-scented Creatures in hunting after their Prey, will exactly follow the Track, where it hath gone before them ; upright Souls strive as much to imitate Christ as to enjoy him ; and they practice Imitation in order to Fruition. We cannot hope to have our passage through the World sweetned with the presence of Christ, unless we learn to be as he was in the World. As our Lord Jesus carried himself in all manner of Conversation towards God, and towards Men, so shall we do, if our Hearts are set aright ; because there is no meeting with him out of his own Way. In that very way of filial Obedience wherein Christ sought the honouring and pleasing of God, we are also to seek the approving of our selves to Christ, and the kind Intimations of Love from him.

6. They seek a Crucified Jesus indeed, that have an holy Ambition of being *Crucified with Christ*, as *Paul* was, *Gal. 2. 20.* Perhaps, there are some (too many) in the World, who would be glad to be sure that Christ was Crucified for them, but they are by no means willing to be Crucified with him :

him; *i. e.* In the Language of the same Apostle, *Rom. 6. 6. To have their old Man Crucified with him*; their Lusts and Corruptions destroyed, and put to Death, by Vertue of *his Death*. Now this argues a great deceitfulness of Heart, in desiring some Benefit from Christ, without any regard to his Person; *i. e.* seeking not *him* but *his*. We dissemble with Christ, except we covet to have our Sins drowned in his Blood, as well as to have our Souls waisted to Heaven by it. This is what the Holy Apostle aimed at, and prest after, *To know the Fellowship of his Sufferings, and to be made conformable to his Death*; *Phil. 3. 10.* All that are found faithful seek to resemble the Death of Christ by *Mortification* now, as well as to reap the Fruit of it in *Glorification* at the last.

II. *Why all disquieting Fears, in such, as truly Design the seeking of Christ, are groundless.* I would not be understood to speak against those humble, reverential, cautious, watchful Fears, which do very well become every Child of God, and suit with the Relation wherein he stands; and the Difficulties, Snares, and Hazards whereby he is yet surrounded; but I am to beat down those uncomfortable, restless, perplexing and distracting Fears, which are quite of another kind, which are more proper to *Slaves* than *Children*, and which are indeed the Remnants of a *Spirit of Bondage* in Believers. These ought not to be, for Six Reasons.

I. *This*

1. *This Crucified* Jesus whom we seek, *lives* on our behalf; He Died for us, and now Lives again for us, and Lives for ever; and so long as he Lives, we shall not Dye. When *Joseph's* Brethren saw that their Father was Dead, they begun to be afraid that their Brother *Joseph* would now Revenge himself upon them, for the Injury they had formerly done to him, *Gen. 50. 15.* So if Christ had seen Corruption, and remained still under the Power of Death, we might have feared, whether he had made sufficient Satisfaction in Dying; and whether God might not have prosecuted us notwithstanding. But now this fear is taken away by his Revival; and therefore what should we fear? Christ is our living, powerful Advocate with God; and both able and ready to defend us from whatsoever Charge can be brought against us. If any should object and say, here is Comfort enough in this; if I could be perswaded and assured, that *Christ is mine*, and that he Lives *for me*; but this I doubt of. I Answer in short, thou needest no other Evidence of thy Propriety, and Interest in Christ, than thy solicitous seeking of him, as before described.

2. *This Jesus* is graciously *near unto us*, or else we should not find in our Hearts to seek him; our very *Enquirings after him*, are an infallible Proof of *his Presence with us*; 'tis the Influence of his Spirit which draws out our Souls towards him, which of themselves are naturally removed very far from him.

Never

Never any Man in the World had the least serious Thought of taking one step to find out Christ, till the Spirit of Christ infused that Thought into him. Therefore we have real saving Communications from Christ, though we have not discernable refreshing Communion with him, which we wish and wait for. And he never will nor can forsake us, where he hath once wrought such a Work upon us, of inclining our Hearts unto himself. Do we then fear that we are yet estranged from Christ? 'Tis impossible, for if so, no Account can be given, how we should be prevailed with to do what we do. Do we fear Christs future Departings at any Time from us? This is also to fear where no fear is; for he adheres more firmly to us than we can to him.

3. *This Jesus will certainly support and sustain us in seeking him*, till he is found of us: When like *Gideon's* handful of Soldiers we are faint, yet pursuing, *Judg. 8. 4.* He will take Care to Minister secret Cordials for the relief of our Spirits, in due Measure and Season. He that Conquers our Aversions at the entrance of this Work, will be sure to help our Infirmities in the Progress of it. Hear what *David* says, and he speaks it as his own Experience; *Psalms 63. 8. My Soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me.* Do we therefore fear, that we shall droop and sink, that we shall flag and fail, before we have attained our End, and met with Christ to our Satisfaction? There is

Cause enough for this fear, I confess, if we were to look to our selves only; for we are poor, feeble, spiritless Creatures, when we are left alone; but considering the mighty Assistance we have to depend on, this fear is causeless, *Isa. 40. 31. They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their Strength; they shall mount up with wings as Eagles, Creatures noted for swiftness in hasting to the Prey.*

4. *We are never out of our Way, while we are in the Pursuit of Christ.* The very seeking of him is such a safe and blessed Employment, that no Evil can befall us if we closely follow it. And indeed 'tis that which ought to be the continual Employment and Business of our Lives; for as long as we are Pilgrims and Sojourners, which is our State here upon Earth, we are still to seek, *Heb. 11. 13, 14.* Christ may be lost again and again in our Apprehension, before we leave the World; the Discoveries and Manifestations which he makes of himself to us now, are but Transient, like the shining of the Sun in a Cloudy Day, which often breaks out, and is as often darkned again.

Christ draws near to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*, and walks along with them, but *their Eyes were held that they could not know him, Luke 24. 15, 16.* As soon as they knew him he vanishes, *ver. 31.* A little after he appears in the midst of them, *ver. 36.* And then he is parted from them again, *ver. 51.* Therefore the seekers of Christ are in the way of Christ, and need not to fear.

5. *Our*

5. *Our seeming Separations and Distances from Christ, shall Work for our Good.* Gods withholding of many Things from us, which we reckon very desirable, is as truly an Act of Mercy, as the giving of his Son to us; and his Sons withholding of himself as to sensible Fruition, may be in as much Love, as if he imparted himself most freely. Yea, why may not I say, that he may withhold himself in more Love, and make it turn more to our Advantage? Then if he imparted himself most freely. If he in all his Dispensations and Dealings with his own, does that which is *best*, it must needs be so. The Wc-men here were passionately concerned that *their Lord was taken away*; they saw the Place where he had lain, and they wanted to see him in it: But was it not much better to hear the News of his being *risen again*; than to find him *Dead*? So poor Souls that are seeking of Christ, should suppress their Fears with this Consideration, that 'tis better for them to be covered with a Cloud, than brought forth to the Light, if Christ think it so. Communion and Desertion (like *Esthers* Fast and Banquet, Sackcloth and Royal apparel) shall serve the same end of their Salvation.

6. *What we come short of obtaining upon Earth, will be abundantly recompenc't, and made up in Heaven.* Where, they that now seek the Lord, shall be *ever with him*, 1 *Thef.* 4. 17. If it be afar off, that we seek him now, 'tis our Comfort, that we shall have

the nearest views *hereafter* ; whatever Doors, or Walls, or Lattesses are now betwixt him and us, *hereafter* there shall be none. 'Tis uncertain, whether I may find my Beloved, so as I would, or so as perhaps I have sometimes done, at this or that particular season, in this or that particular Duty, I cannot absolutely depend upon it; but this I may be Positive in, that he can withdraw himself no longer, than while I am in this World. Nothing more certain in all the Bible, than that in Glory there will be constant sight and full Enjoyment; and 'tis as certain that this will be my final Lot, if seeking with my whole Heart be my present Work. Every Holy Soul will drop all its fears at the Gate of Heaven, as ashamed of them; and therefore why should we indulge that fear here, that must be banisht thence?

III. *Whence do these Fears arise*, in such as seek a Crucified Jesus?

Answer, From four Springs.

1. *From darknes of Understanding.* The Children of Light are enlightned but in part, their Knowledge is imperfect, and Mistakes may sometimes have as much influence upon them, as the greatest Truths. Thus wrong Apprehensions of Things will produce unreasonable Fears; when a Believers way is plain and clear, he goes on Boldly and Confidently; but when he is bewildred and confounded, and the Eye of his Mind overcast,

cast, so that he cannot discern where he is, every Shadow will affright him. *As the gross Ignorance of Carnal Sinners is the Impediment of their Conversion, so the remaining Ignorance of troubled Saints is a great hindrance of their Comfort.* When the Devil Tempts or Terrifies, he does it in the Dark; he first casts a Mist before us, and then comes out like a roaring Lyon against us. Error in the Judgment, disposes to fearfulness of Heart.

2. *From weakness of Faith.* Where Fear is under the Rule and Government of Faith, 'tis never excessive or sinful; but where fear gets the upper Hand of Faith, and prevails against that which ought to give bounds and measures to it, 'tis always inordinate and irregular: This was the Case of Christs Disciples; *Mat. 8. 26. Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* Our Lord does in Effect answer his own Question, for the Reason of their being so fearful, was because they had so little Faith. Faith will hold up the Soul that's embarked with Christ (as they were) in the greatest Storms, and though the Soul may be moved with Fear, it shall never be sunk. If we did but believe strongly and stedfastly, we should find a cure for all those tremblings and tossings which now our Spirits may-be too much hurried and disturbed with.

3. *From forgetfulness of the Promises.* We have many precious Promises given us in the Gospel, which if we did receive and hold fast they

could not but silence and confute our Fears. *I Remember thy Judgments* (says David) *and have Comforted my self*, Psal. 119. 52. Whenever we are sinfully afraid, the Promises of God are out of our deliberate Thoughts; we either do not think of them at all, or think not so of them, as to fix our Minds upon them. Therefore the Angel puts the Women in remembrance of what Christ had told them before his Death, that he would rise again and meet them in *Galilee*, ver. 6. *He is risen*, as he said. This Promise of his seems to be forgotten and buried with him. Nay the Enemies of our Lord seem to take more notice of it, than the Disciples; they thought of it so much, that therefore they secur'd his Grave that he might be hindred as they thought from rising again.

4. *From the Ardency of their Love.* As to all the other three Springs of disquieting fear in Believers, it may be truly said, that it cometh of Evil, but it may partly proceed from this better Cause also. There is no Person who knows what it is to *Love*, but also knows, that the greater and more vehement our Love is to any Object, the more apt we are to be afraid of losing it, and the more jealous and mistrustful upon the least appearance of Alienation, or any Interruption of Converse with it. They that Love not the Lord Jesus, are not exercised with any such Fears concerning him; so that these fears are hopeful Evidences of a good State, though in themselves they are not excusable from Sin. IV. Use.

IV. Use.

1. Learn, that the offence of the Cross of Christ is really no Offence; and none whose Hearts are right and sound can stumble at it. The Women here sought Jesus who was Crucified, they did not sleight him for being so. The Cross of Christ is not a thing to be ashamed of, but rather to be gloried in, it should not prejudice us against Christ, but rather be a Motive to attract us to him.

2. The Memory of him that dyed for us, ought not to perish with us. We are very prone to forget our Friends, soon after we have laid them in the Dust, how amiable and serviceable soever they have been in their Lives: But Christ is to be everlastingly Remembred. The Devout Women express their Respects to him after Death at his very Tomb.

3. The shewing forth of *Christs Death*, is as necessary as the belief of *his Resurrection*. It is not enough for us to seek him as *glorified*, but we must also seek him as *Crucified*; seek him where he once was among the Dead *in the Grave*, as well as where he now is among the Living *in Heaven*.

4. Let no Sinner whatsoever be afraid of seeking Communion with Christ. *Mary Magdalen* is particularly named here, *ver.*
1. See *Mark* 16. 9. Do not say 'tis Presumption in such as you; for 'tis a com-

mendable Act of Faith, and wretched Infidelity not to do it.

5. Let no Sinner that seeks, doubt of his Success in seeking; *Psalm 69. 32. The humble shall see this, and be glad, and your Heart shall live that seek God.* This is as true as God is true, and therefore Question it at your Peril. 'Tis his faithful saying, and in his Name I require you to receive it, you who desire to find out Christ, and be found in him, can never be lost for want of him,

S E R M.

SERMON IV.

Nov. 5. 1697.

ISA. LIV. 15.

*Behold, they shall surely gather together,
but not by me: Whosoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall
for thy sake.*

THE Great and Magnificent Promises which this Chapter contains, shew plainly enough, that they concern not so much the Jewish Church after her return out of *Babylon*, as the Christian Church, which was to be far more glorious, in the New-Testament Times. The very first Verse, hath a manifest Reference to the numerous Conversions of the *Gentiles*, who though formerly Barren, should exceed in fruitfulness under the Gospel; and on this Account, we read *Ver. 5. That the Holy One of Israel*, should be called, *the God of the whole Earth*. Large Assurances of spiritual and temporal Blessings are given hereupon; with respect to the Prosperity of Souls,
and

and the flourishing also of their outward State. As to this latter, we need look back no further, than *ver. 14.* The Words Preceding the Text; *In Righteousness shalt thou be established, thou shalt be far from Oppression, for thou shalt not fear, and from Terror, for it shall not come near thee.* The Summ of which seems to be this; God will raise up such righteous Magistrates and Rulers every where in the latter Days, as that his People shall be deliver'd not only from Oppression, but from the Fear and Terror of it too. The Church and the World have been severely exercis'd with Princes, *Who like Lions, have learned to catch the Prey, and devoured Men,* Ezek. 19. 3. Such as have removed the Bounds, *Hof. 5. 10.* Trampled upon Laws, and invaded Properties: But there is a Time to come, when all such Thrones shall be cast down, *and Zion shall be redeem'd with Judgment, and defended with Equity.* Then (may some say) surely after this, we shall have no Tribulation in the World; we shall meet with no more Storms or Tempests, but enjoy Calm and settled Weather, without any Interruption; we shall have nothing to do, but to *sit under our Vines and Fig-Trees, and there will be none to Molest and Disturb us* from that Time forward. The Text is brought in as an Answer hereto; *Behold, they (i. e. they that wish thy Hurt, that would be oppressing thee, as before) shall surely gather together, &c. q. d. You must not*

not think, that Sinners will be so entirely consum'd out of the Earth, as that there should be no Designs or Endeavours to overthrow your Establishment; As you will have the Poor always with you, to draw out your Charity, so you will always have some Enemies (though Feeble and Impotent) for the Trial of your Faith and Courage; you'll never want some to unite and combine against you; but whoever they be, you have this for your Encouragement, I will not be on their side, nor take their Part, and by seeking your Destruction, they shall in the Issue, find their own.

Obf. The unwearied mischievous Attempts of the Adversaries of God's People in the World, as they are made without God, so they shall end in Ruine to themselves.
Here,

1. I shall shew, That the Adversaries of God's People will be unweariedly attempting of Mischief against them.

2. How those Attempts are without God.

3. That they shall end in Ruine to themselves.

4. Why they shall do so.

5. Use.

I. To shew, *That the Adversaries of Gods People in the World, will be unwearied in their mischievous Attempts against them.* So says
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the Text, *they shall gather together.* This is sure, upon various Grounds.

1. *He who foreknows all their Thoughts, Inclinations and Purposes from Everlasting, hath foretold it.* His is a sure Word of Propheſie, and not a Tittle of it ever fail'd; and 'tis as impoſſible that finite Agents ſhould do leſs than he hath ſaid, as that they ſhould do more. He hath a full Proſpect of all before him, and does in one undivided inſtant ſee how every Cauſe will operate, and what Effects it will produce; He can tell what he intends to ſuffer them to do, and what he intends to withhold and reſtrain them from doing: And therefore if his Underſtanding cannot be deceiv'd, nor his Knowledge be miſtaken, his Predictions muſt needs be true. So when we read of *Gog's coming up, as a Cloud to cover the Land* (which ſome think, is meant of a Succeſſion of the Churches Enemies) and not of a ſingle Perſon; the Lord puts the Queſtion. *Art thou he of whom I have ſpoken in old Time, by my Servants the Prophets of Iſrael, which Propheſied in thoſe Days, many Years, that I would bring thee againſt them?* Ezek. 38. 16, 17. God hath infallibly determin'd in himſelf all that ſhall be, and ſome part of thoſe Determinations are declared in his Word; and therefore nothing can fall out contrary to that Word, but every thing muſt fall out to agree with it, if it be a ſaying of God, it cannot be unfulfilled.

2. *So long as there are any of the Children of the Devil out of Hell, he will be inspiring them with Malice against the Church of God on Earth.* The Old Serpent will be the Old Serpent still, and there is the same Poison which runs in the Veins of all his Seed. The Enmity is incurable and immortal, and not to be slain between the two Seeds, unless they were to joyn and become one. They that Work Iniquity, and they that live Godly in Christ Jesus can never amicably walk together, any more than Fire and Water can be reconciled to run quietly along in the same Stream. Till all Things are subdued to Christ (which will not be till the end comes, 1 Cor. 15. 28.) we cannot expect that all should be at perfect Peace with those that are Christ's; for as our Lord and they that are his, are united in their Interests, so they are usually assaulted with the like Opponents. The Christian Society cannot look for universal Concord and Good-will, except there were an universal Subjection to the Holy Founder. 'Tis no wonder, that they should Act against Religion, who are under the full Power of natural Corruption, as many will be to the very Last. *Wickedness proceedeth from the Wicked*, 1 Sam. 24. 13. justly applied by David to Sauls unreasonable pursuit of him.

3. *The very Defeats and Disappointments which the Enemies of the Church receive, make them to renew their attempts with greater Violence*

lence and Fury; they are not the more dishearten'd, but the more exasperated; not made to desist, but rather provok't to go on. When God scatters and foils his Adversaries, they will, if possible, rally themselves again, and strive to recover their Ground: And when their Projects are blasted, and their Hopes perisht, they are so much the fuller of Rage and Revenge, *Isa. 44. 25. That frustrateth the Tokens of the Liars, and maketh Diviners Mad.* The more eminently God hath lifted up his Hand, the more insolently have they stretcht out theirs; and to make amends for their being driven back, they have made the greater hast in their next return. *Pharaoh* grew the harder, and more obstinate in refusing to let *Israel* go, after God had sent so many Plagues upon him; and though he did unwillingly dismiss them at the last, he would have satisfied his Lust upon them, if he could have overtaken them. *When Dagon was fallen upon his Face before the Ark*, the sottish *Philistines* took him, and set him in his Place again, *1 Sam. 5. 3.* Divine Appearances against them do not easily Plung them into Despair, but add a fierceness to their Spirits, and put an Edge to their Opposition.

4. *The fearful Expectation of future Vengeance, is a Spur to their diligent Use of all the present Opportunities of sinning.* 'Tis not so in it self, but the contrary; it ought to deter them from Sin, and excite them

to Repentance, but through their Corruption, it renders them most resolutely and desperately Wicked. As God sees that their Day is coming, so his Enemies cannot but have some Dread and Jealousie of it themselves; they can hardly forbear to think (sometimes at least) that their Day of Triumph and Jollity is going over, and their Day of Reckoning and of Account is coming on; but they are the worse by reason of such Thoughts. As sensual Beasts cry, *Let us Eat and Drink, for to Morrow we Dye*; 1 Cor. 15. 32. So Cruel Beasts, and inhumane Devils, quicken themselves to acts of Barbarity, to eat the Flesh, and drink the Blood of Saints, on the same Motive. Because they know that Death and Judgment will speedily prevent them, and they cannot do what they would, they will be eager to do what they can; if their Time be short, they will hatch as much Mischief in it, as is possible; as if it were their only Covetousness and Ambition to fill up the Measure of their Sins, before Wrath come upon them to the uttermost. Men of such Principles and Tempers will surely gather together.

II. *How are these unwearied Attempts against the People of God, without God?* So God himself says positively, here in the Text, but *not by me*. This may be open'd and stated in five Propositions.

1. 'Tis most undeniable, that the Churches Enemies can neither do, nor contrive the doing of any thing absolutely without God. No second Cause can Act but in dependance upon the first; no Creature can sublift, no faculty can perform any of its operations, if Providence did not concur. The worst of Men live and move, and have their Beings in God, while they are running to do Evil; for if he should suspend his influence, they must stand still, and sink into nothing. The whole Power of Darknefs would be utterly disabled from doing any harm, as the most innocent Creatures are uninclin'd to it, if that Power were not upheld in its Exercise by a greater. All the Plots which are formed beneath, prove vain and fruitless, unless there be a Permission given from above. Proud Men would turn the World upside down, but the great God carries their Counsel headlong whenever he pleases, *Job* 5. 13. If he put his Bridle in their Jaws, it will either hinder them from stirring, or cause them to err, *Isa.* 30. 28.

2. It must be granted also, that the Enemies of the Church can do nothing effectually, but as God really employs them to be the Instruments of his just Displeasure; and so they are frequently employ'd, being not fit for any other Work, and on several Accounts most fit for this; like the common Executioners in humane Courts, who are generally the basest of Men. They are said
to

to be ordain'd and establish'd for Correction, *Hab.* 1. 12. They are called Gods Sword, and Gods Hand, *Psalms* 17. 13, 14. The Rods of Gods Anger, *Isa.* 10. 5. The Weapons of his Indignation, *Chap.* 13. 5. Hence it is that the King of *Babylon* is styl'd God's Servant so often, *Jer.* 25. 9. ch. 27. 6. ch. 43. 10. Because God punish't his People by his Means. When the *Assyrian* came against the *Jews*, and made such havock and spoil among them, God sent him, and gave him a Charge, *Isa.* 10. 7. Thus wicked Men are many Times the Messengers and Commissioners of a Just and Holy God against his offending Children.

3. *The Attempts of Enemies against Gods People are notwithstanding, without Gods Approbation.* God permits many Things to be done which he approves not the doing of; and therefore we are not to fetch our warrant from Providence, but from the Word. Whatsoever is against the Rule of Gods revealed Will, is not by him; for we must go according to that, or else we walk contrary to him, and Sin in what we do. On this Account God entred that complaint against his People, *Hos.* 8. 4. *They have set up Kings, but not by me; they have made Princes, and I knew it not* (which must be understood of his approving Knowledge; as Christ is said not to know the Workers of Iniquity, *Luke* 13. 27.) That which the Prophet refers to, is the falling off of the Ten Tribes of *Israel* from the

House of David to Jeroboam; God says expressly, that this Thing was from him, 1 Kings 12. 23. Providentially order'd and dispos'd by him, as well as foretold, Chap. 11. 31. Yet they sinn'd, because God had given the Kingdom to David and his Family for ever, 2 Chron. 13. 5. And to that Family they owed Subjection.

4. *The Attempts of Enemies, when they have most Success, are without God's truly favourable Presence.* None of the Adversaries of the Church can ever lay any Claim to that gracious Promise, which belongs peculiarly to the Church her self, *I am with thee.* God hath no respect to their Persons, even when he shines upon their Counsels; nor is it out of Kindness to them, but to signify how he is displeased with his People. Treacherous Dealers are counted happy oftentimes, and appear to be so; for God Plants them, yea they take Root, they Grow, yea they bring forth Fruit, as the Prophet speaks with a remarkable Gradation, Jer. 12. 1, 2. But there is nothing of the real Love and Good-will of God in all this; they are the Objects of his hatred and loathing at the same time; he abhors them, and beholds them afar off. These Dispensations, though such as they desire, and are pleased with, are no Tokens of Mercy; Their Prosperity is a Curse and a Plague, but not a Blessing.

5. *The Attempts of Enemies at that Time, which the Prophet here hath a Relation to, will be*

be without Gods Assistance, and consequently without Success. God will not so much as seemingly favour them always; but when he hath perform'd his whole Work by them, he'll make them know that they are but Men, Psalm 9. 20. Poor weak Creatures, when his Power is withdrawn from them. *I have Created the Waster to destroy,* says God, ver. 16. of this Chapter, the Words following the Text; but what can the Waster do alone, more than any other Creature of God? What can he do when God hath no further use to make of him, when Destructions are come to a perpetual End? This Text gives ground for the Expectation of such a Time; wherein all the Commissions of evil Men from God against his People shall finally expire. Though they may falsely pretend and presume otherwise, as in the Case of Sennacherib, which the Event confuted, 2 Kings 18. 35. *Am I now come up without the Lord against this Place to destroy it? &c.*

III. That all these Attempts of the Adversaries of God's People will issue in Ruine to themselves. So we read here; *Whosoever shall gather together shall fall, &c.* Their fall is as certain as their gathering together, and so must necessarily be, if we consider these six Things.

1. The greatest Attempt which was ever made by the Devil against the Church, in the

Person of Christ himself, became the Means of subverting his own Kingdom. Herod, and Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the Children of Israel were all gathered together by the Instigation of Satan against our Lord Jesus, Acts 4. 27. But what was the Issue? He was set as King upon his Holy Hill of Zion, Psalm 2. 6. And they were broken and dasht in Pieces, like a Potters Vessel, ver. 9. The Devil thought he had laid the Ax to the Root then, and should have cut down all the Hopes of God's People at once; but he then receiv'd the greatest and most fatal blow. Our dying Redeemer by Death destroyed the Destroyer, triumpht over Principalities and Powers; and he hath the Promise of the Father, that all Enemies shall be put under his Feet. The Head of the Serpent is irrecoverably bruis'd, and so shall those other Dragons be, which are no better than his Seed and Spawn, Psalm 110. 6. He shall wound the Heads over many Countreys.

2. The standing of the Churches Enemies, is the most precarious and uncertain Thing; not like that of the Church upon a Rock, an Everlasting Foundation, but a sandy, deceitful Bottom. Psalm 73. 18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places: Places which they hold and possess, meerly at the Pleasure of God, which they cannot settle or fasten themselves in, at their own Will; Places, sometimes of the greatest heighth, but proportionably of the greatest Danger, from whence,

whence, while they are dazzled with the Light shining on their Ways, they commonly tumble on a sudden. They stand the longer, that they may the less suspect their fall; and God does conceal the exact Period of their standing, with this Design, that their fall may be the more surprizing. They stand only till their Iniquities are compleated, till the Judgments of God are Ripe to be inflicted, till they have worn out the Lease of limited Time, and Wrath is ready to break forth; and how soon this may be, they can never tell.

3. *All that they have or can have to Support and Defend them, will not be sufficient, when their appointed Destruction comes.* What can be the Strength or Stability of the Enemies of God in his Day of Visitation, who shakes the very Earth out of her Place, so that the Pillars thereof tremble? What can bear up those, whom he hath purposed to throw down? *If he will not withdraw his Anger, the Proud helpers do stoop under him, Job 9. 13.* They that think to Protect their Confederates from the stroke of God, may feel it and share in it themselves, but can never Guard another Person against it, *Isa. 31. 3.* *When the Lord shall stretch out his Hand, both he that helpeth, shall fall, and he that is holpen, shall fall down, and they all shall fall together.* Every Creature that offers to do service, will be a Part of the Sacrifice, when God comes in his Garments of Vengeance. Even Beasts are threaten'd

with Men, *Zech. 12. 4. Chap. 14. 12.*, with 15. compared, And God's rebuke on such is Recorded, *Psaln 76. 6.*

4. *The Enemies of the Church are rais'd up for this Purpose, that God may Honour himself upon them. Pharaoh is an instance of it; Exod. 9. 16. In very Deed, for this cause have I rais'd thee up, to shew in thee my Power and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth.* God would never suffer such Monsters to Tyrannize over the best of Mankind, and to Reproach and Blaspheme him, as they ordinarily do, if he had not some Ends to bring about, that would be honourable to himself, and degrading to them at last. As long as they fill their Thrones of Iniquity, and keep their Seats of Violence, the Majesty of Heaven is contemn'd and vilified: And if they should go off with Impunity, his Glory would be lost. And therefore we may be sure, this shall not be; if God be so Jealous for his own Name, that he will be sanctified in the needful Correction of his own People, we cannot imagine, that he will fail to vindicate himself by the just revenging of his Adversaries.

5. *The greatest Enemies that the Church of God ever yet had, have fallen; though as likely to stand once, as any now or hereafter can be.* How have all the Parts of the Image in *Nebuchadnezzar's* Prophetical Dream been smitten one after another? Who does not know, that there hath been a successive Dissolution

solution of all the Four Grand Monarchies and Empires of the World? Was not the *Babylonian* pull'd down by the *Persian*, the *Persian* tript up by the *Græcian*, the *Græcian* sunk by the *Roman*, and the *Roman* at length lost and swallowed by the *Papal Power*? What's become of all the formidable Men of Blood, that have slain their Thousands, and ten Thousands, and not been satisfied? *Have they not born their shame with them that go down to the Pit, though they caused Terror in the Land of the Living?* Ezek. 32. 24. What are they that breath out Threatnings now, better or mightier than they that have perisht in all Ages before them?

6. *The present Enemies of the Church have indeed begun to fall; which is an hopeful Token that they shall surely fall.* And whether the present Enemies may be the last or not, I think, 'tis beyond all Controversie, that they are the worst which can be. Now that there are certain beginnings of their Ruine is hardly to be doubted also. It was founded long since in Prophecie, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*, Rev. 14. 8. And without any nice and curious Observation, we may discern that the Building cracks. Anti-christ hath been consuming eminently ever since the Reformation one hundred and eighty Years, by the Spirit of Christs Mouth in the Preaching of the Gospel, according to 2 *Thes.* 2. 8. He hath been driven out of these Nations, and several other Countrys,

into which we hope, he shall never re-enter. Many Learned and Holy Men have batter'd the *Roman Jericho* a great while with invincible Arguments; and Ministers, like the Priests of Old, continue Blowing with their Trumpets; we only wait for such a Breath of God, and Shout of the People, that the Walls may fall down flat and the City be taken.

IV. *Why shall the Attempts of the Enemies of God's People end thus in their own Ruine?* The Text acquaints us with this likewise; they shall fall for thy sake. *Quest.* How is this to be understood?

1. *Some read the Words, they shall fall before thee, that thou mayst see it.* The God who is now secretly carrying on their intended Ruine, which is the matter of thy Faith, shall at length visibly accomplish it in thy open view, to thy Comfort and Rejoycing. So *Prov.* 29. 16. *The Righteous shall see their fall.* *Psal.* 52. 5, 6. *God shall destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, &c. The Righteous also shall see, &c.* So *Israel saw that great Work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians*, *Exod.* 14. 31. The Impressions which such sights make upon such Witnesses, render them desirable, though awful, *Jer.* 20. 12. *Let me see thy Vengeance on them.*

2. *For thy sake, cannot be meant, for thy Merit, but for thy Good and Benefit.* So *Mal.*

Mat. 3. 11. I will rebuke the Devourer for your sakes; not because you deserve it (the People of God never did that) but that you may have the Advantage of it. Their Destruction is to make way for your Salvation, Prov. 11. 8. The Righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the Wicked cometh in his stead. Psalm 141. 10. Let the Wicked fall into their own Net, while that I withal escape. They must fall, that the Church of God may rise; for while they stand, the Church is kept under. Babylon must come down into the Dust, that Zion may be lifted up out of it.

3. For thy sake, may be meant, for the Kindness and Care which I bear to thee, q. d. For thy sake, whom I am so mindful of, so watchful over, and so delighted in, and have such an affectionate Regard to; thou art the Object which I have in my Eye; and my Compassion and Good-will are the Springs and Reasons of my promised actings and appearances on thy behalf. God Loves his own so well, that as he upholds the World on their Account, so on their Account he will destroy any Part of it, which is injurious to them. Therefore they are much mistaken, who level them with other People; as Ezek. 25. 8. Behold, the House of Judah is like unto all the Heathen.

V. Use.

1. *Security and distrust are sinful Extreame, and both of them equally to be avoided.* To presume that Enemies will not gather together, and to despair of their fall, are flat Contradictions to the Text. To say that the Church of God shall not be assaulted, is against Scripture. To say, *That she shall not be moved*, is what the Holy Ghost says, *Psalms 46. 5.* We ought not to fall asleep, or to dwell carelessly; nor yet should fearfulness surprize us, or horror overwhelm us. We have a mixture of Good and of Evil Tidings; like Milk and Honey, to temper the Wormwood and the Gall, there is enough on one Hand to awaken us, and on the other to encourage us. *Associate your selves, O ye People* (there's Matter of prudent Fear) *and ye shall be broken in Pieces*; (there's Matter of comfortable Hope) *Isa. 8. 9.*

2. *A People dear to God, and peculiarly interested in him, are in a far more blessed Condition, than all the Earth besides.* God will do any Thing, or undo any Thing for their sake, he will Cut off Nations, tread upon Princes, remove Crowns and Scepters out of the way, for their sake. Enemies cannot do so great Things against them, but that God will do as great for them, and much greater, *Joel 2. 20, 21.* All the specialities of Providence are upon their Account, and if any thing extraordinary happen at any Time in the World, we may be Confident, it is for their Service.

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vice. As God is their God, so he is their peculiar Saviour, and therein they have the preheminance to all other People whatsoever, *Deut. 33. 29. Happy art thou, oh Israel, who is like unto thee, oh People saved by the Lord?*

3. The greatest Danger which God's People are or can be in, is when they engage God against them by Sin, and provoke him to favour their Adversaries. 'Tis possible that God may for the Chastisement of his People, turn away his Wrath from their falling Enemies, *Prov. 24. 18. i. e. To punish us, they may for a while escape unpunished; and during that Time they may gather, in some Sense by God; and then only are they terrible and dreadful. When God lengthens out their Chain, and lets them loose upon his People, none can foresee the Spoil and Desolation which they may be empowered to make; otherwise we might boldly and stoutly bid defiance to them.*

4. The Obstructions of Mercy are on our Part, and not on God's. If any ask, why this Word is not fulfilled, and all our Enemies thrown down, the Answer is easie, because we our selves do help to hold them up. They would fall for our sake, if they did not stand by our Means. Two Things especially prolong *Babylons* Reprieve; the unreformed, and the divided State of the Protestant Churches.

1. The unreformed State. Our Reformation

tion is yet too imperfect; and many instead of advancing it, are apt to put it back; being fond of retaining *Egyptian* Flesh-pots as a part of their Diet still. Many that profess to come out from among them, approach too near to them. And even where the Purity of Religious Worship is most strictly maintain'd, the Power of Practical Godliness is too much wanting. There is a lamentable degeneracy among the best; that we may say, as *Lam. 4. 1.* *How is the Gold become dim! thr most fine Gold changed.*

2. *Their divided State.* Enemies joyn Hand in Hand, and their Arms are made strong, by the Differences and Quarrels of our Friends. Our sworn Murderers that thirst for our Blood have the fairer Opportunities to pursue their Designs, when upon every Difference we are ready to take one another by the Throat. The disturbance of *Jerusalem's* Peace by her own Children, is really a seeking of *Rome's* Prosperity; but a firm and hearty and (as much as may be) extensive Union among our selves, would hasten the dissolving of the Antichristian Constitution.

3. *The Memorials of past Mercies are to be preserv'd for our Support in future Difficulties.* *Moses's* Rod was laid up, wherewith wonders had been wrought; and so was *Goliath's* Sword, wherewith his own Head had been Cut off, *1 Sam. 21. 9.* Former Experiences are often improv'd in Scripture as Arguments with God, *2 Chron. 20. 7.* *Isa. 51. 9,*

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10. No wonder that Faith dies, upon any emergent Hazard, when such gracious Acts of God are buried in forgetfulness, and not so much as a Monumental Stone erected over their Graves. Therefore,

1. *Let us keep alive the remembrance of this Days Deliverances.* For God hath upon this Day twice given convincing Answers to that tempting Question. *Is the Lord among us?* Exod. 17. 7. The same God who blew up the Powder-Traitors, set his Hand again a second Time, to rescue us from their fiery Successors. And this latter Work of God seems to have been the greatest; for the shifting and altering of Governments, is one of the most illustrious Proofs of God's Sovereign Dominion; Jer. 49. 38. *I will set my Throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the King, and the Princes, saith the Lord.* God hath snatcht us from between their Teeth, who, if they could once have swallow'd us up, would never have vomited us out alive; these Nations have not only heard, but felt how cruel their tenderness is; and therefore we may justly reckon our selves deliver'd from the worst of Deaths. And even our Enemies themselves are happily deliver'd from the occasions of such Sin; for where Men's Hearts are full of mischievous Devices, 'tis a Mercy (if they would value and improve it as such) to be depriv'd of Power to execute and accomplish them.

2. *Let us live as a People deliver'd from*

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our spiritual Enemies; who would be far more
hurtful to us, and ought to be much more hate-
ful. A Deliverance from Sin and Satan is
the most glorious of all, and indeed without
this, all our temporal Deliverances will but
aggravate our Everlasting Destruction. Let
Sinners go to Christ, and let Believers Tri-
umph in Christ, as such a Deliverer, and
seeing there is a sacred Feast appointed to
Commemorate this Deliverance, let us keep
it with all thankfulness, and take care to
Live up to the solemn Obligations of it.

F I N I S.

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